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**OPENING STATEMENT OF CONGRESSMAN CURT WELDON
CHAIRMAN, MILITARY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
HEARING ON MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRAMS**

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This morning, the Military Research and Development Subcommittee meets in open session to receive testimony on the ballistic missile defense programs of the Department of Defense. I want to welcome my colleague and good friend Owen Pickett, the ranking member of the R&D subcommittee. I also want to note that we have invited all members of the Procurement subcommittee to our hearing today, and I welcome Duncan Hunter, chairman of the Procurement Subcommittee and ranking member Norm Sisisky, and all my friends from the Procurement Subcommittee.

We also welcome today's witnesses, Dr. Jacques Gansler, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Technology, Lt. Gen. Les Lyles, US Air Force, Director of the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization, and Lt. Gen. Gregory "Speedy" Martin, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition.

The Administration has made much of its proposal to add \$12 billion to the fiscal year 2000 budget. Many on this committee have noted that much of that increase is based on calculated savings from lower inflation and fuel costs that may or may not materialize. Others have noted that much of the increase goes toward the military pay raise, which, as important as it is, does nothing to address the military's growing modernization challenges.

The Administration has also made much of the fact that the fiscal year 2000 budget includes a \$4 billion increase for military procurement to enhance modernization.

But I will point out now that the Administration also decreased R&D funding by \$3 billion, a more than eight percent decrease compared to last year's budget. Procurement is an important part of modernization. But so is research and development. And R&D is continually being starved for funds, apparently to meet other needs.

The situation in the Department's ballistic missile defense programs reflects this larger budget reality. I am pleased with some of the recent Administration BMD pronouncements. But this year's budget proposal reveals that fiscal constraints have driven key programmatic decisions which undermine our ability to meet the already existing ballistic missile threat. And that threat continues to surprise the military and intelligence communities with the speed at which it is increasing.

I am encouraged by the Administration's announcement that an additional \$6.6 billion has been identified for a national missile defense that might be deployed. But I am concerned that the Administration

has not committed to deploying this system. This failure to commit to deploying a system for which funding has been programmed seems inconsistent at best. It gives rise to the natural suspicion that the Administration is not really behind the program, and the funds identified for NMD could turn into a bank to be raided to pay for other needs. Indeed, the suggestion that NMD funds identified by the Administration may be used to implement the Wye River Middle East peace accords, to be restored to NMD only by the next Administration, just reinforces this impression.

I am also pleased that the Navy Theater Wide upper tier missile defense system is being better defined and is more adequately funded through the future years defense program. But at the same time, I am concerned that the upper tier strategy being proposed by the Ballistic Missile Defense Organization is more responsive to fiscal constraints than theater missile defense needs. I understand that competing THAAD and Navy Theater Wide, with the winner to get the bulk of the upper tier funds, will certainly motivate the contractors.

But the upper tier strategy is motivated by the desire to sequence the two programs—because of lack of funds. It will also delay—and may kill—the system that experiences greater technical challenges. I can't recall any system that "got better" when its funds were cut.

The litany of BMDO programs that are strapped for funding is long. MEADS, the program to develop a mobile theater air and missile defense system to defend maneuver forces, has been cut back so much it is no longer a development program. Technology funding is down 50 percent. RAMOS, the Russian-American cooperative BMD program, has been terminated at a time when Russian-American cooperation in this area is more important than ever. I can understand that all programs have to be rigorously reviewed and that weaker programs get pushed to the end of the line. But when the R&D budget declines so precipitously, many important programs are reduced or shut down, not due to technical difficulties but to overall lack of funding.

This is especially egregious in ballistic missile defense programs, when BMD is one of the most critical deficiencies in our military today.

I am delighted to have General Martin with us today, because the Air Force is the only service which has really stepped up to funding some of the important BMD efforts on its own. Yet the shortage of R&D funds hits the Air Force in the same way.

The Air Force, for example, is fully funding the Airborne Laser, which I believe will be an important part of our theater missile defense architecture, and has stepped up to the plate on the Space Based Laser program with additional funds in a responsible program that will embody technical advances developed over the next several years. But I am extremely concerned that the Air Force has arbitrarily cut funding and slowed the SBIRS High program, which is important to both the NMD and TMD efforts. This reduction was motivated apparently by not much more than the desire to free funds for other purposes in fiscal year 2000.

The delay has little or no programmatic basis and in fact will end up costing the Air Force and the American taxpayer a half a billion dollars in increased program costs and years of delay.

Nor am I satisfied with the way the Air Force dealt with Congress on this matter. It is not acceptable to inform Congress after the fact that the contractor has been ordered to slow work in fiscal year 1999 because of a proposed cut in fiscal year 2000. This approach denies Congress its prerogative to review DOD actions and address those it finds to be unjustified.

I am looking forward to the testimony of our witnesses today. I expect that they will all have their own views on BMD priorities and funding, and I'm looking forward to exploring those.